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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 002692

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SIGNIFICANT CRIMINAL INCIDENTS IN SAN JOSE

REF: SAN JOSE 2435

1. In the past several weeks, significant criminal acts have been committed near the Embassy or near areas where most Mission personnel live and work that merit reporting at this time. Following is a summary of recent events in San Jose:

A. Armed robbery and shooting of Czech diplomat: On November 14, 2005 a Czech diplomat was shot and robbed while in his vehicle, shortly after departing a local bank in Pavas. The diplomat was shot in the arm while sitting in his vehicle then robbed of USD 5,000. The location of the crime was within .5 kilometers of the Embassy. The police captured the three men suspected of the crime on the same day.

B. Armed robbery of restaurant Il Pomodoro in Escazu - On November 10, 2005 four armed men robbed the restaurant and its customers at approximately 2100 hours. There were no injuries reported in the armed robbery, but the incident occurred less than one kilometer from the U.S. Ambassador's residence and in an area where most Embassy personnel live. The suspects in this robbery have not yet been apprehended.

C. Armed invasion of Dutch diplomat's residence: On November 10, 2005 armed individuals entered the residence of a Dutch Embassy family in a gated community called Villa Real. This community is very new and is located approximately 4 miles outside of the areas approved by RSO for U.S. Embassy personnel. The doors to the diplomat's residence were unsecured and the robbers simply walked into the residence. The family was fortunate - they were not injured nor was much stolen due to the fact their household effects had not yet been delivered to their home.

D. Stolen briefcase of Embassy officer: Embassy officer had his briefcase stolen from his unsecured vehicle while dropping off laundry. Subsequent to the theft of the briefcase, the officer had charges made on his credit/debit card in San Jose.

E. Armed robbery and shooting at bank across the street from U.S. Embassy on 17 October - Previously reported in reftel.

2. These criminal events do not appear to have any particular pattern, but their occurrence in locations close to our Embassy and Mission residences is of interest. It is not uncommon for the Christmas season to bring an increase in crime in San Jose, with criminals from other parts of the country coming to San Jose to prey on those who receive the 13th month Christmas bonus, which is almost always paid in cash. Of concern is most of these events involved multiple persons and weapons. There is no indication at this time that diplomats are being targeted in these crimes, but this does not change the fact that diplomats were involved in some of these incidents.

3. RSO will continue to monitor and report significant criminal events in San Jose as the holiday season approaches.

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